

## HOUSE RESOLUTION 79

By Gilmore

A RESOLUTION to recognize and commemorate the 60<sup>th</sup>  
Anniversary of the Congress of Racial Equality's  
Journey of Reconciliation Ride.

WHEREAS, sixty years ago, on April 17, 1947, representatives of the Congress of Racial Equality (CORE) rode through Knoxville and Nashville, Tennessee, as they tested the United States Supreme Court ruling in the *Morgan v. Commonwealth of Virginia* case, which was litigated by the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP) on behalf of Irene Morgan, who, on July 16, 1944, defied the laws of segregation and refused to give up her seat on a Virginia bus to a white couple; and

WHEREAS, on June 3, 1946, the U.S. Supreme Court outlawed racial segregation in interstate travel, prompting CORE to initiate its 1947 Journey of Reconciliation, which was a forerunner of the 1961 Freedom Rides; and

WHEREAS, an interracial group of sixteen men, composed of eight blacks and eight whites, rode through the states of Virginia, North Carolina, Tennessee, and Kentucky on a two-week bus trip testing the South's compliance with the Supreme Court's ruling in the *Morgan v. Virginia* case; and

WHEREAS, organizers of the Journey of Reconciliation understood that discriminatory social laws and patterns were not transformed by the Supreme Court's decision and that progress could come only with struggle; and

WHEREAS, Bayard Rustin and George Houser, the journey's coordinators, recognized that racial segregation could not be defeated by courage alone; painstaking organization, unrelenting self-discipline, and faithful commitment to nonviolence were also fundamental; and

WHEREAS, on April 9, 1947, the riders boarded buses at the Greyhound and Trailways stations in Washington, D.C., for the beginning of the Journey of Reconciliation; and

WHEREAS, eight days after leaving Washington, D.C., on April 17, 1947, Journey of Reconciliation riders arrived in Knoxville, Tennessee, where they attended a full day of interracial meetings; and

WHEREAS, after participating in these meetings, the riders tested compliance on the night Greyhound bus run to Nashville, which was the first night test of the entire Journey; and

WHEREAS, the group experienced no evidence of anger or violence from passengers, and after arriving in Nashville they met with college students and lectured on the nonviolent struggle for racial equality and justice; and

WHEREAS, the Journey of Reconciliation continued until April 23, 1947, when it concluded in Washington, D.C.; and

WHEREAS, while CORE and Fellowship of Reconciliation officials determined that without direct action taken by groups and individuals Jim Crow in the South could not be deposed, they were also convinced that direct action must be accompanied by nonviolence; and

WHEREAS, while the first freedom ride demonstrated the achievability of nonviolent direct action in the Upper South, societal inertia still kept the races separated on interstate buses and trains; and

WHEREAS, the Freedom Rides of 1961 tested the U.S. Supreme Court's 1960 decision in the *Boynton v. Virginia* case, which extended the Court's 1946 directive to all interstate transportation facilities, including terminals, waiting rooms, restaurants, and other amenities; and

WHEREAS, Nashville's student activists were not the progenitors of the Freedom Rides of the 1960s, but they became their driving force after the CORE Freedom Riders were brutally beaten and their bus was fire-bombed in Anniston, Alabama, on May 14, 1961, which led CORE to terminate the rides; and

WHEREAS, the Nashville students' single-minded efforts to continue the Freedom Rides had major consequences for the Civil Rights Movement and led the Interstate Commerce Commission to promulgate regulations eliminating racial segregation in train and bus terminals; and

WHEREAS, it is fitting that this General Assembly should recognize the pivotal role Tennessee students played in the modern American black struggle to desegregate interstate transportation and auxiliary facilities; now, therefore,

BE IT RESOLVED BY THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES OF THE ONE HUNDRED FIFTH GENERAL ASSEMBLY OF THE STATE OF TENNESSEE, that on the occasion of the 60<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of the Congress of Racial Equality's Journey of Reconciliation Ride, we hereby honor and commend the trailblazers of 1947 and the 1961 torchbearers who, without corrupting their moral fiber with wrath, turned a nonviolent model of resistance into a powerful demonstration upon which American blacks seized their freedom.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that an appropriate copy of this resolution be prepared for presentation with this final clause omitted from such copy.